

DIETARY GUIDELINES FOR GOOD HEALTH

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ABSTRACT

The risk of developing obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, alcoholism and heart disease is on the increase in Nigeria, the main cause could be the eating behavior of the populace. Varieties of private and government organizations (WHO, Cancer Society, Heart Associations, Academy of Sciences and Ministries of Health) world over have recommended dietary guidelines which are not difficult to implement and inexpensive. This paper discussed the dietary guidelines which would encourage people to modify their eating behavior in ways that are both healthful and pleasurable.

KEYWORDS: WHO, Heart Association, Food and Nutrition Board, Diet, High blood pressure, Stroke

INTRODUCTION

The dietary guideline is known to be a total intake over a day or week, not to a single meal or certain foods. These are designed to promote adequate carbohydrate, vitamin, protein and mineral intake. It also emphasizes changes that will reduce the risk of cirrhosis of the liver, obesity, hypertension, stroke, heart disease, alcoholism, arteriosclerosis and diabetes. In Nigeria, it is unfortunate the economic situation has not permitted the populace to eat adequate and nutritious foods and lack of good guide did not make people to consider their state of health.

Dietary guidelines have been set by a variety of private and government organizations. These guidelines are designed to reduce the risk of developing certain diseases. One of the regulating bodies, Food and Nutrition Board of the Nation Academy of Sciences, USA recommended intakes of nutrients that meet the needs of almost all healthy people of similar age and gender. The recommended dietary allowances (RDA) have become the premier nutrients standard in both the United States (U.S) and the World.

More than 40 countries now have their own RDA, but many other countries use the US RDA. These RDA are just allowances and not requirements some people need less or more than the amount of nutrients. They are updated about 4-5years (Table 1).

The RDA has got many uses which include, food labeling, food and nutrition information and education, clinical dietetics, nutrient supplements and special dietary food, sample diet for food programs, guide for food selection programs, planning and obtaining food supplies for groups, evaluation of dietary survey data and other scientific research, developing new or modified food products just to mention a few. The RDA outlined in Table1 is provided with ranges to allow people to determine their unique requirements. This paper is aimed highlight the RDA intakes of nutrients that meet the needs of healthy people.

THE DIETARY GUIDELINES

A close look at each of the summarized guidelines would aid diet planning.

1. Eat a variety of foods

It is ideal to consume a variety of foods and one way to balance ones diet is to select from these five major groups everyday. The groups are:

i. Fruit

- ii. Vegetable
- iii. Bread, Cereal, Rice and Paste
- iv. Milk, yogurt and cheese
- v. Meat, poultry, fish, dry-beans, eggs and nuts.

Women and adolescent girls need to eat more calcium rich and iron-rich foods. A meal consisting of beans with gari accompanied by a glass of milk or cheese and an orange cover all groups. Fats, oils, and sugar/sweets can be added to the diet in moderation just to increase its flavor and help deliver some nutrients.

2. Eat a diet low in fat, saturated fat and cholesterol

It is advisable to choose a low fat option among foods to leave room for the recommended servings from the five groups. Meat, milk and its products are source of saturated fats in most diet, while dietary cholesterol is derivable from animal sources. It is recommended that fats, oils, sweet should be used sparingly. Intake of yogurt, milk and cheese should be encouraged. If one prefers whole milk or low-fat or non-fat milk, one should cut or reduce the fat elsewhere in meals. "Moderation" should be the watch than "elimination" of some groups.

3. Balance food intake with physical activity- maintains or improves your weight

It is advisable to do 30 minutes or more of moderate physical activity daily such as walking, bicycle riding, rope skipping, jumping, just to mention a few. Less time should be devoted to sedentary activities such as sitting. High-fat foods contain more energy per serving than other foods and may increase the likelihood of weight gain. Generally, the more the weights gain for ones height, the higher the weight - related risk. It is recommended that when weight loss is needed, this must be done slowly. A visit to the gymnasium for physical exercise would be ideal.

4. Eat a diet moderate in sugars

Maintaining a nutritious diet and a healthy weight is crucial and so sugars should be eaten in moderation by most healthy people and sparingly by people with low energy needs. Both sugars and starches can promote tooth decay, the more they are consumed and the longer they reside in the mouth the greater the risk for tooth decay. It is advisable to wash and rinse the mouth after each meal.

5. Eat plenty of grain products, vegetables and fruits

Most fruits and vegetables are naturally low in fat and provide many essential nutrients. Eat more of these along with more grain products. (Bread, cereals, rice etc). A high carbohydrate diet is based largely on plant foods that contain starch. The only plant exception is fruit which contains glucose, fructose, sucrose, as well as pectin. From the health point of view a high carbohydrate diet consisting largely of plant foods is a diet that is rich in fiber, nutrients, vitamins, saponin and essential fatty acids.

6. Eat a diet moderate in salt and sodium

Salt and other sodium containing ingredients are often used in food processing. Many dietary and lifestyle choices influence blood pressure. There is no way at present to tell who might develop hypertension from eating too much sodium. Consumption of less salt or sodium is not harmful and is recommended for the healthy normal adult.

7. Drink alcoholic beverages in moderation

Alcoholic beverages are known to supply energy, but few or no nutrients. They are the third contributor to energy intake for adults in the United State. Moderate intake is associated with a reduce risk of certain forms of heart disease, stroke, cancer, liver and pancreases disease, accidents, birth defects, death by other causes, risk for hypertension, heart failure. A moderate intake consists of two or fewer servings of 12 ounce of beer, 5 ounces of wine and 1½ ounce of distilled spirits per day. It is advisable to drink alcohol with meals. People with certain medications, children, pregnant women and those who plan to take part in activities that require special attention or skill like driving should not drink. People with alcoholism usually

have unbalanced diets, which can impair absorption of vitamins and minerals from the gastrointestinal tract. An associated problem

Table1. Recommended Dietary Allowance (Per day)		
Nutrient	Unit	People above 4 years Old
Vit A	Retinol equivalents	800-1000
Vit D	International Units	200-400
Vit E	International Units	8-30
Vit K	mg	60-80
Vit C	mg	60
Folate	mg	0.4
Thiamin	mg	1.1-1.5
Riboflavin	mg	1.1-1.7
Niacin	mg	14-20
Vit B-6	mg	1.3-20
Vit B-12	µg	2.4-6.0
Biotin	mg	0.03-0.3
Pantothenic acid	mg	5-10
Calcium	g	1.0
Phosphorus	g	0.7-10
Iodide	µg	150
Iron	mg	10 -18
Sodium	mg	500
Magnesium	mg	310 - 420
Copper	mg	1.5 – 3.0
Fluoride	mg	3.1 – 3.8
Zinc	mg	12 - 15
Chloride	mg	750 - 3400
Manganese	mg	2.0-50
Potassium	mg	2000
Selenium	mg	55-70
Chromium	mg	50-200
Molybdenum	mg	75-250
Carbohydrate	g	50-100
Fats/oils	g	No RDA but min of 4% of total energy intake
Fiber	g	20-35
Protein	g	44-56
Sugar	g	70-80
Water	ml	1ml/Kcal expended a day

Source: Wardlaw (1999).

is poor metabolism. Alcohol consumption decreases the absorption of many B vitamins, such as thiamin, riboflavin, niacin and folate. All of these vitamins are important in maintaining proper metabolic and nervous system function

FOOD LABELS TO PLAN HEALTHY DIETS.

Nutrition labeling is intended to give information concerning the energy, protein, fat, carbohydrate, minerals and vitamins contained in a given amount of food and consumers have more nutrition information in food labels. It is possible to determine which foods are healthful, a consumer can know how a particular food fits into their daily nutrition needs. On the labels, important information like fat, cholesterol, saturated fat and sodium are highlighted. It is advisable to use them to make wise choices among foods. It is

recommended that regulatory bodies like National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) should enforce the use of labels on food packages in Nigeria.

Nutrient Density Guide in Food Choice

Nutrient density is the ratio formed by dividing a food's contribution to nutrient needs by its contribution to energy needs. When its contribution to nutrient needs exceeds its energy contribution the foods are considered to have a favorable nutrient density.

To determine the nutrient density of a food, this is simply by comparing its vitamin or mineral content with the amount of energy it provides. A food is said to be nutrient dense if it provides a high amount of a nutrient for a relatively small amount of kcals. The higher a food's nutrient density the better it is as a nutrient source. Generally, nutrient density is assessed with respect to individual nutrients, for example; many fruits and vegetables have high content of vitamin C compare with their modest energy content. (They are nutrient dense foods for vitamin C), nonfat milk is much nutrient dense than sugared soft drink for many nutrients. Nonfat milk has more protein, vitamin A, thiamin, riboflavin and calcium than soft drink. Nutrient dense foods, such as nonfat and low-fat milk, lean meat beans, oranges, carrots, whole bread and whole-grain breakfast cereals do help balance less nutrient dense foods such as cookies and potato that many people like to eat. Eating nutrient dense foods can aid diet planning for people who tend to consume little food including some older people and those following weight-loss diets.

CONCLUSION

This paper has highlighted the RDA intakes of nutrients that meet the needs of healthy people, but do not take into account special needs that may require individual adaptation (physical activity, climate, aging and clinical problems). However, it is important to follow the dietary guidelines in order to promote the relationship between nutrient intake and high wellness, longevity and chronic disease prevention.

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